Maritime industry can help us reach net zero by 2050

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Body

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According to the International Energy Agency, industrial ports and domestic shipping fleets are among the most effective places to achieve economy-wide reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and scale up hydrogen supply chains. The shipping industry, ferry operators and port authorities have an important role to play in Canada's plans for a net-zero economy by 2050. The full-scale adoption of zero-emission ships will also create growth opportunities and expertise in Canada's shipbuilding sector that will benefit coastal communities and others across the country.

The U.K. and Norway have developed detailed maritime climate plans that leverage ports and the development of zero-emission ships to achieve domestic climate goals and to position themselves for a share of the potential trillion-dollar market associated with the global transition to cleaner shipping. Government-funded demonstration projects, procurement policies and ambitious targets proving zero-emission technologies are central to their plans because they help to overcome upfront capital costs and reduce private sector risk. The U.K.'s new Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution will see investment of more than £200 million ($348 million) into modern ports, hydrogen hubs and clean maritime technology demonstration projects.

Canada numbers among the few countries that could become leading exporters of clean hydrogen, due to our low-carbon electricity and abundance of water. Competing in the emerging global hydrogen market will depend in large part on our ability to build supply and demand at home. Ports provide a tremendous opportunity to scale-up hydrogen demand while having the added strategic benefit of being Canada's gateway to the international energy marketplace.

Oceans North has made recommendations to the federal government to advance hydrogen port hubs, port electrification and zero-emission ships such as ferries as key elements of a maritime sector climate plan under the new climate accountability legislation.

The potential for the maritime sector to bring about new jobs and innovation critical to Canada's economic recovery depends on the speed with which Canada develops and implements action. To achieve its net-zero by 2050 target, the first zero-emission ships must be in operation by 2030.

Moving ahead of the International Maritime Organization's less ambitious agenda to reduce emissions by 50 per cent by 2050 and toward net zero is big news for Canada's maritime sector. Canadian companies like Ballard, Corvus, Hydrogenics and others are leading the clean shipping revolution that is happening in other countries. It is time for Canada to unlock the potential of the maritime sector to help cut emissions across the entire economy. Doing so is not just good for the environment, it is critical to securing our place as a leading energy supplier in the future clean energy economy.

Brent Dancey is the director of marine climate action at Oceans North.

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